

SDR 156/2011

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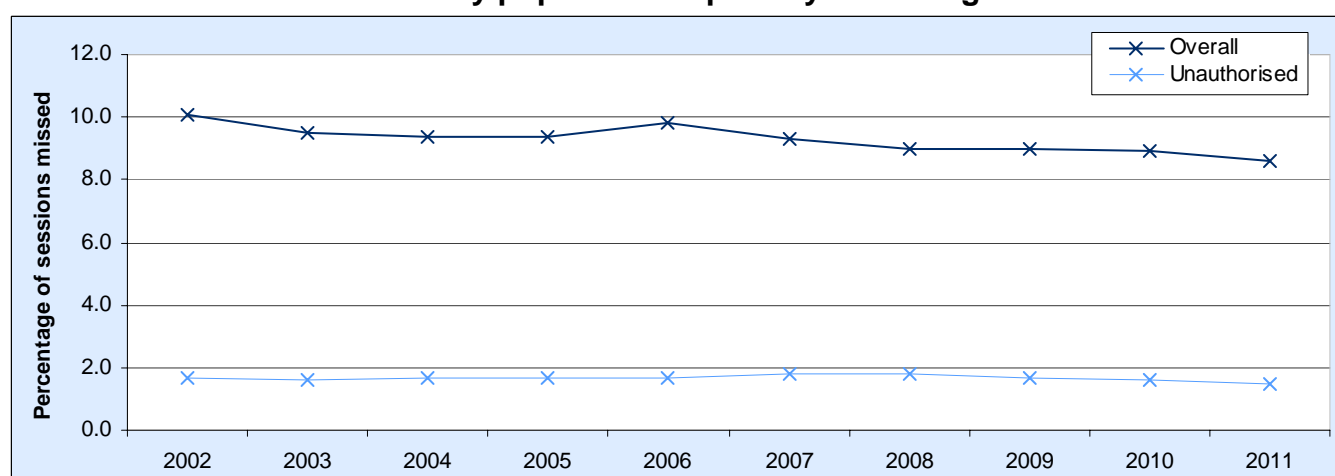
## Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2010/11

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary, special and independent schools in Wales. Information relates to the start of the academic year to the late May Bank Holiday for the academic years 2001/02 to 2010/11.

### Key results

Following a peak in 2005/06, overall absence has been decreasing each year. Unauthorised absence has been stable at between 1.5 and 2.0 per cent of sessions since 2001/02. A session is half a school day.

**Chart 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age**



### Overall absenteeism

- In 2010/11, 8.6 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through authorised and unauthorised absence, a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 2009/10 (Table 1).

### Unauthorised absenteeism

- In 2010/11, 1.5 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through unauthorised absence, a small decrease from 2009/10 (Table 2).

### Distribution of absence in maintained secondary schools

- A little over 7,000 pupils (4.1 per cent) had no absence from school in 2010/11 (Table 6);
- Just under one fifth of pupils account for over half the total number of absent sessions (Table 6).

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## Introduction

Chart 1 shows authorised and unauthorised absenteeism from secondary schools in Wales since the 2001/02 academic year. The tables that follow break down the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to absenteeism by school type, gender, Local Authority and Free School Meal entitlement. Three new charts have been included in this statistical release: Charts 2 and 3 show the change in the range of Local Authority-level absenteeism over time and Chart 4 helps users to understand how the proportions of pupils absent for varying lengths of time have changed.

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**Table 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)**

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
LA Maintained Secondary Schools	9.5	9.5	9.9	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.6
Special Schools	12.9	11.7	13.7	13.9	12.2	12.3	10.8	11.6
Independent Schools	5.1	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.8	6.0	6.3	5.5
Total	9.4	9.4	9.8	9.3	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.6

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 8 independent schools and 1 special school that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2010/11, 8.6 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 8.9 per cent in 2009/10;
- Since 2003/04 special schools have had the highest rate of overall absence and independent schools have had the lowest rate, but because of the relatively small number of these schools compared to the number of maintained secondary schools these schools do not significantly affect the total overall absence rate.

**Table 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)**

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
LA Maintained Secondary Schools	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5
Special Schools	2.6	2.4	3.1	3.3	2.5	2.3	1.9	2.5
Independent Schools	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Total	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 8 independent schools and 1 special school that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2010/11, 1.5 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to unauthorised absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from 2009/10 and continuing the downward trend seen since 2007/08;
- Special schools have had the highest rate of unauthorised absence and independent schools the lowest rate since 2003/04, but as with overall absence these schools do not significantly affect the total unauthorised absence rate.

**Table 3: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all schools, by gender (a)**

	Percentage of schools sessions missed				
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Number of schools providing gender information	263	303	306	311	304
Percentage of schools providing gender information	83	97	98	97	98
Unauthorised absences:					
Boys	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.4
Girls	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5
All absences:					
Boys	9.2	8.8	8.7	8.7	8.4
Girls	9.8	9.3	9.2	9.1	8.8

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) It is not advisable to compare year on year changes for data on absenteeism by gender. Up to 2006/07 the data was supplied voluntarily and hence different schools responded each year. In 2007/08 it became compulsory for maintained secondary schools to provide gender information, however it remains voluntary for special and independent schools.

- Historically, girls have had a higher rate of overall absence than boys and this continues to be the case in 2010/11, however the gap has narrowed;
- Breaking the pattern of the previous three years, in 2010/11 girls had a higher rate of unauthorised absence than boys, rather than the same rate.

**Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2010/11 (a)**

Proportion entitled to free school meals	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
10% or less	7.1	0.6	53
15% or less, but over 10%	8.2	1.2	57
20% or less, but over 15%	8.6	1.1	37
30% or less, but over 20%	9.4	2.0	50
over 30%	11.8	3.8	25
All maintained schools	8.6	1.5	222

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Government

(a) Free school meal data is based on a three year average.

- Table 4 suggests that there is a relationship between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism. It suggests that in general schools with a higher proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals have higher absenteeism rates;
- Free school meals are provided to pupils in low income households, so this suggests that there may be a more general relationship between deprivation and pupil absence.

**Table 5: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by Local Authority (a)**

Local Authority	Percentage of school sessions missed due to:							
	All absences				Unauthorised absences			
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Isle of Anglesey	10.1	9.1	9.4	9.1	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.3
Gwynedd	8.6	9.1	8.7	8.1	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.0
Conwy	8.8	8.4	8.1	7.6	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.6
Denbighshire	8.8	9.0	8.8	8.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	1.4
Flintshire	7.5	7.8	7.8	7.6	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Wrexham	8.2	8.0	8.5	7.6	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.6
Powys	8.6	8.7	8.3	8.5	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.5
Ceredigion	8.4	8.2	8.3	7.5	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.2
Pembrokeshire	9.1	8.9	9.3	8.7	1.5	1.4	1.5	0.9
Carmarthenshire	9.3	9.2	8.8	9.0	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.8
Swansea	9.2	9.3	9.4	9.0	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.6
Neath Port Talbot	7.9	8.2	8.3	8.1	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Bridgend	9.1	8.8	9.1	8.8	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.7
The Vale of Glamorgan	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.7	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.5
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	10.0	10.3	9.5	9.4	2.2	2.3	1.8	1.8
Merthyr Tydfil	9.4	9.2	9.1	8.6	1.8	1.3	1.3	0.9
Caerphilly	9.7	9.6	9.5	9.3	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1
Blaenau Gwent	9.2	9.4	9.4	10.6	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.1
Torfaen	9.3	9.7	9.5	8.3	2.6	3.6	3.0	1.3
Monmouthshire	9.4	8.2	8.0	7.8	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.6
Newport	10.0	9.4	8.7	8.2	2.0	2.2	1.9	2.0
Cardiff	9.7	9.5	9.6	9.6	3.3	2.9	2.8	2.9
Wales (b)	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.6	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 8 independent schools and 1 special school that did not respond to the survey.

(b) Includes independent schools.

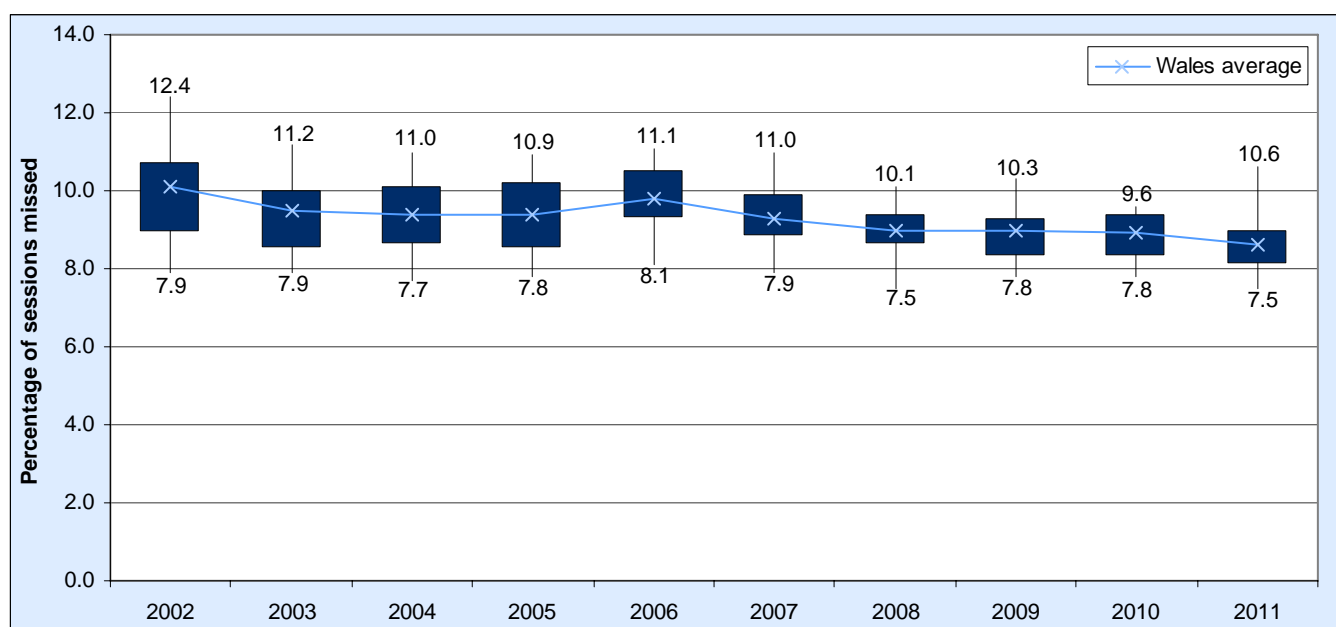


- In 2010/11 Blaenau Gwent Local Authority had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained secondary and special schools (10.6 per cent), while Ceredigion had the lowest rate (7.5 per cent);
- In 2010/11 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (2.9 per cent) was found in Cardiff, while Flintshire, Powys and Neath Port Talbot had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence (0.5 per cent).

**Chart 2: Range of Local Authorities' rates of overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age**

Chart 2 shows how the range of overall absence rates at the Local Authority level has changed over time and can be used in conjunction with the 'All absences' columns in Table 5. For each academic year a line has been drawn from the lowest Local Authority's overall absence rate to the highest. For example, in 2010/11 the lowest rate was 7.5 per cent and the highest rate was 10.6 per cent.

For each year the quarter of Local Authorities with the highest rate of overall absenteeism lie above the blue box, the quarter of Local Authorities with the lowest rate of overall absenteeism fall below the blue box and the remaining half of Local Authorities are in the blue box. The Wales average overall absenteeism rate has been plotted to show how the changes in Local Authority rates relate to the change in Wales as a whole.

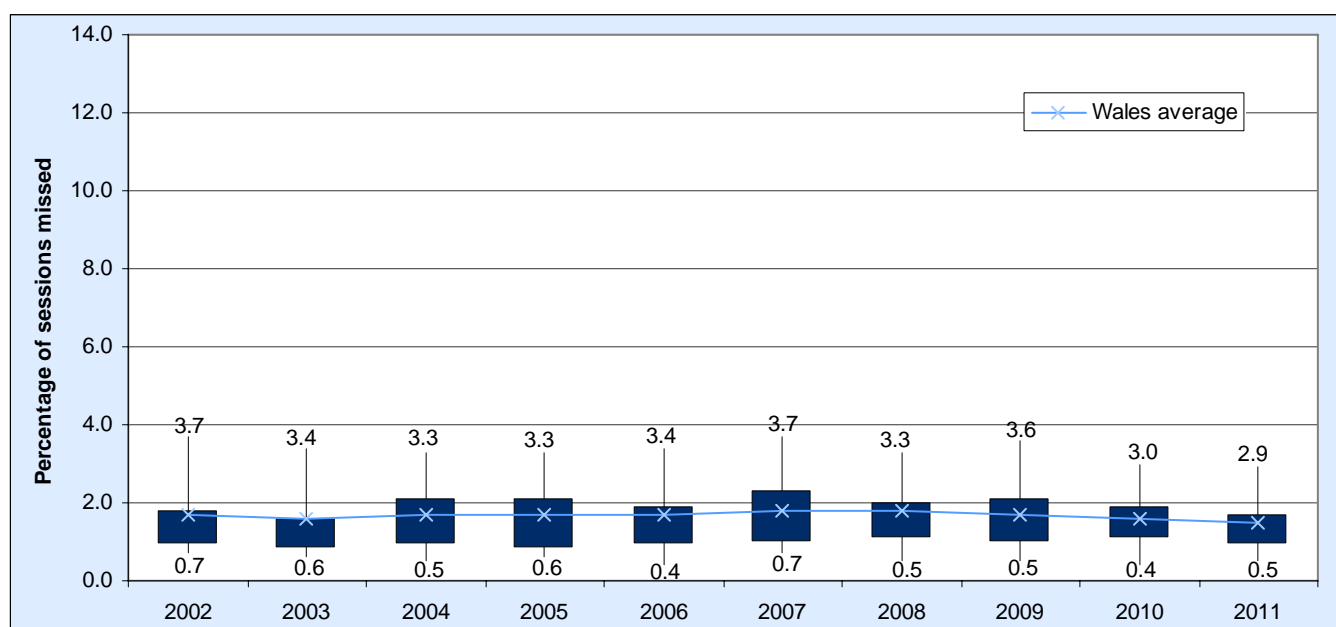


- The highest rate of overall absenteeism in 2010/11, 10.6 per cent in Blaenau Gwent, is the highest rate since 2006/07, but is 1.8 percentage points lower than the highest rate in 2001/02;
- The lowest rate of overall absenteeism was 7.5 per cent in Ceredigion and has decreased by 0.3 percentage points since 2009/10, but in general the lowest rate has been stable since 2002;
- The top of the blue box for 2010/11, marking the level below which three quarters of Local Authorities fall, is just above the Wales average for 2009/10. This means that although one Local Authority had a relatively high rate of overall absenteeism, almost three quarters of Local Authorities had a lower rate of overall absenteeism than the Welsh average last year.

**Chart 3: Range of Local Authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age**

Chart 3 shows how the range of unauthorised absence rates at the Local Authority level has changed over time and can be used in conjunction with the 'Unauthorised absences' columns in Table 5. For each academic year a line has been drawn from the lowest Local Authority's unauthorised absence rate to the highest. For example, in 2010/11 the lowest rate was 0.5 per cent and the highest rate was 2.9 per cent.

For each year the quarter of Local Authorities with the highest rate of unauthorised absenteeism lie above the blue box, the quarter of Local Authorities with the lowest rate of unauthorised absenteeism fall below the blue box and the remaining half of Local Authorities are in the blue box. The Wales average unauthorised absenteeism rate has been plotted to show how the changes in Local Authority rates relate to the change in Wales as a whole.



- The highest rate of unauthorised absenteeism in 2010/11 was 2.9 per cent, which is the lowest that this value has been since 2001/02.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence was 0.5 per cent in Flintshire, Powys and Neath Port Talbot, but has increased a little since 2009/10. In general the lowest rate has been stable since 2002;

**Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence, 2010/11**

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2010/11		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	7,082	4.1	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	46,681	27.0	5.8
5.5 to 10 days	40,484	23.4	13.5
10.5 to 15 days	27,617	16.0	15.2
15.5 to 20 days	17,624	10.2	13.5
20.5 to 25 days	11,089	6.4	10.9
more than 25 days	22,309	12.9	41.0
Total	172,886	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

- A little over 7,000 pupils (4.1 per cent) had no absence from school in 2010/11, while just over 22,300 pupils (12.9 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days (5 school weeks);
- Almost one fifth of pupils account for over half of the number of missed sessions in 2010/11.

**Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by their overall absence rates, 2010/11**

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2010/11		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	7,082	4.1	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	55,104	31.9	8.0
Over 4%, but 6% at most	24,376	14.1	8.2
Over 6%, but 10% at most	35,754	20.7	18.8
Over 10%, but 20% at most	35,338	20.4	32.8
Over 20%, but 30% at most	8,848	5.1	14.2
Over 30%, but 50% at most	4,657	2.7	11.4
Over 50%	1,727	1.0	6.7
Total	172,886	100.0	100.0

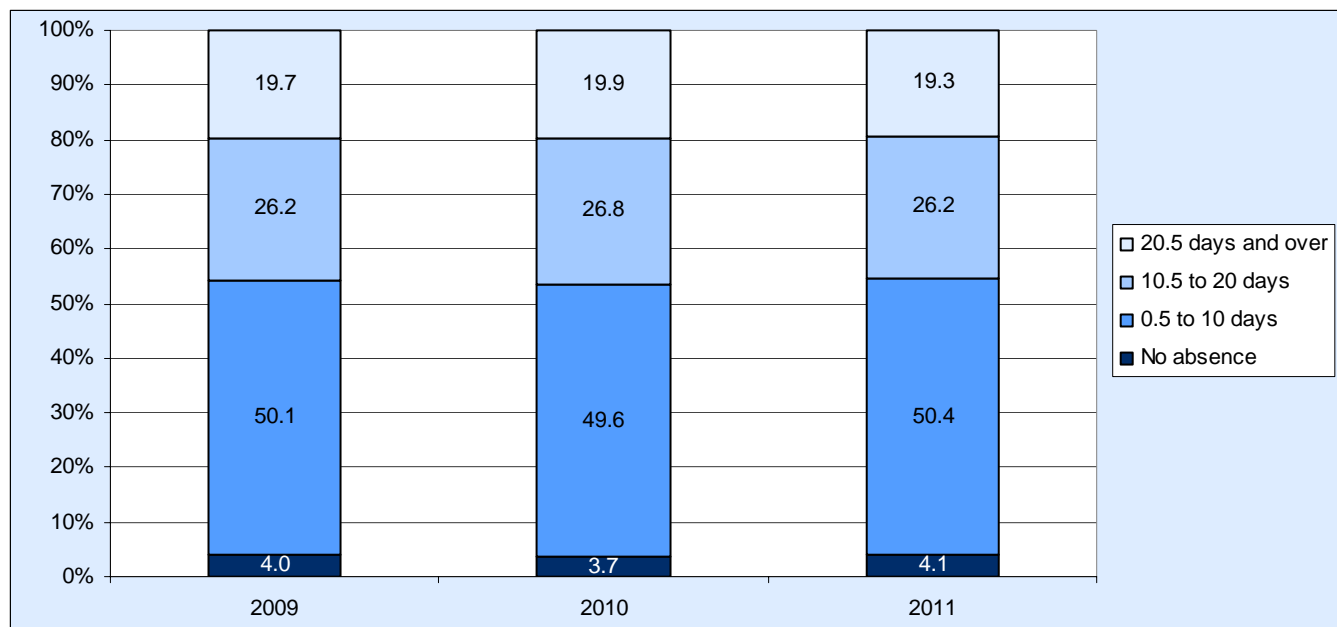
Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

- Just over 1,700 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a maintained secondary school.



**Chart 4: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence**

Chart 4 groups all pupils attending maintained secondary schools in Wales by the number of days that they were absent and plots the percentage of pupils that fall into four groups from 2008/09 to 2010/11. As the legend shows, the bottom bars relate to the percentage of pupils who had no absence and the bars above it increase in length of absence to the top bars which represent the percentage of pupils who were absent for over 20.5 days. We can only produce this chart for the last three years as the necessary data is not available before that.



- There has been very little change in the proportion of pupils in each group over the past three years, but in 2010/11 there were higher percentages of pupils that had no absence or 0.5 to 10 days of absence than previous years, 4.1 and 50.4 per cent respectively;
- In 2010/11 19.3 per cent of pupils were absent for over 20 days, 0.6 percentage points lower than 2009/10.

**Table 8: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools: comparison with England (a)**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Overall absence			
Wales	9.1	9.0	8.9
England (b)	7.3	7.2	6.8
Unauthorised absence			
Wales	1.8	1.7	1.6
England (b)	1.5	1.5	1.4

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government  
Department for Education

(a) The latest data available for England are for 2009/10, so a comparison between England and Wales for 2010/11 is not possible yet.

(b) Figures exclude City Technology Colleges and Academies.

- England's rate of overall absence continues to be lower than that of Wales and the gap between the two rates widened from 2008/09 to 2009/10;
- England have a lower rate of unauthorised absence than Wales, but the gap remains the same at 0.2 percentage points between England and Wales' unauthorised absence rate.

### Accessing the data electronically

The data behind the charts and some of the tables in this release can be found on StatsWales (a free-to-use internet service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables and charts). Please select "Schools and Teachers" at the navigation screen of the following site:

[www.statswales.wales.gov.uk](http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk)



Tables 4, 6 and 7 are based on data not available on StatsWales. For further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools please email [school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

## Notes

### 1 Context

#### 1.1 Policy/Operational

All children who are receiving an education at school during the normal school day must be placed on the attendance register. An attendance register records every pupil's attendance at every session the school is open to pupils and must be called twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register must show whether each pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site (treated as present if they attend that provision), or absent. In addition, where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The Welsh Government expects schools and Local Authorities to take a proactive approach to promoting high levels of attendance and following up pupils with poor attendance at an early stage.

#### 1.2 Related Publications

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2009/10 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2009/10' was released on 8 December 2010 and can be found here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/schools/?lang=en>

England publish absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in the statistical release entitled 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics'. The latest available statistics can be found here: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/index.shtml>

Scotland publish absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in supplementary dataset tables. The latest available statistics can be found on their website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/AttendanceAbsenceDatasets>

Northern Ireland publish primary and post-primary (secondary) school absenteeism data and their latest statistics can be found here: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch\\_pg/32-statistics\\_and\\_research\\_statistics\\_on\\_education\\_pg/32\\_statistics\\_and\\_research\\_statistics\\_on\\_education-pupil\\_attendance.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch_pg/32-statistics_and_research_statistics_on_education_pg/32_statistics_and_research_statistics_on_education-pupil_attendance.htm)

### 2 Data Source

The Pupils' Attendance Record is made up of pupil-level attendance data collected electronically from maintained schools, care of their Local Authority (LA), and school-level attendance data from special and independent schools collected via a voluntary, paper-based survey. Both collections are carried out by the Statistical Directorate within the Welsh Government.

Attendance data for England were taken from the following statistical releases:

- [SFR03/2009 Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2007/08](#) (Table 7.1)
- [SFR07/2010 Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2008/09](#) (Table 7.1)
- [SFR03/2011 Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2009/10](#) (Table 9.2)

## 3 Definitions

### 3.1 Coverage

The absenteeism information in this Statistical First Release relates to the percentage of half-day sessions missed by pupils due to unauthorised and overall absence from the start of the academic year to the late May Bank Holiday. Pupils of compulsory school age (5-15) registered at maintained secondary schools and pupils aged 11-15 registered at special and independent schools are included in the data (ages as on 31st August before the start of the academic year). Attendance data was received from 309 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2010/11 academic year.

The free school meal data is collected through the January Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and is based on a 3-year average. Where schools have merged, the 3-year average for the new school includes free school meal data for the previous schools for the year or years that they were open prior to merging.

### 3.2 Types of Absence

All (or 'overall') absences comprise those which are authorised and unauthorised:

- an **authorised absence** is an absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absence for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness, family bereavement or religious observance);
- an **unauthorised absence** is an absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Note that pupils undertaking approved and supervised educational activities conducted away from the school (e.g. work experience or educational visits) are deemed to be present at the school.

## 4 Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. Between September and November 2010 we conducted a public consultation on our Education Statistics outputs in which we asked for feedback on the quality of the outputs. A summary of the responses has been published and is available here: <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/education/?lang=en>

### 4.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- The Department for Education in England;
- other government departments;
- Local Authorities and schools;
- ESTYN, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales;
- Wales Audit Office;
- The Department for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government;
- other areas of the Welsh Government;
- the research community;
- students, academics and universities;
- individual citizens and private companies and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- the all-Wales education core data packs (the replacement for the National Pupil Database);
- LA and school comparisons and benchmarks;
- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales;
- development of a national banding system for Wales;
- to inform ESTYN during school inspections;
- contributes to the National Performance Indicators;
- international benchmarking;
- the education domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- to assist in research in educational attainment.

## **4.2 Accuracy**

The Welsh Government works closely with schools and Local Authorities in order to ensure all data are validated before tables are published. Data is collated into an electronic return and submitted to the Welsh Government through DEWi, a secure online data transfer system developed by the Welsh Government. Various stages of automated validation and sense-checking are built into the process to ensure a high quality of data.

During the 2009/10 academic year extreme weather conditions forced a large number of schools to close to protect the welfare of their students. Some schools were able to remain open for pupils who could safely attend. Those who were unable to attend on these days were recorded as having authorised absence, thereby inflating the schools' overall absence percentages. Since not all schools had partial closures due to the inclement weather, and those that did close for a varying number of days and had a varying percentage of pupils absent, the scale of the effect of these partial closures on Local Authorities' absence rates could not be measured.

A new statistical category 'Not required to attend' was included in the Welsh Government's attendance data collection for the first time this year. Half-day sessions are recorded in this category in situations when individual pupils' attendance is not possible but the school remains open, such as when pupils are not able to safely attend school, and will not be counted towards the total number of sessions that they could attend in a year. This means that extreme weather conditions will no longer adversely affect either schools' or Local Authorities' attendance percentages.

## **4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality**

DEWi was available for uploading files on 31 May 2011, with maintained secondary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school between the start of the academic year and 27 May 2011. Schools and Local Authorities were then asked to validate their data within the validation period, which closed on 24 June 2011. Special and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 11 and 15 on roll between the start of the academic year and 27 May 2011 by 24 June 2011 and were then sent a summary of their school's data for validation and verification.

Improvements in the data collection method and procedures, along with the help of colleagues in Local Authorities and schools, have resulted in us being able to bring forward the publication of this Statistical First Release by over a month since 2008.

## **4.4 Accessibility and Clarity**

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

## **4.5 Comparability**

Pupil-level absence data was collected from maintained secondary schools for the first time in 2007/08. However, the definitions and calculations involved in the collection have not changed, so comparability over time has not been affected.

Since 1999/2000 secondary schools have been asked to provide, on a voluntary basis, their attendance information broken down by gender. In 2007/08 it became compulsory for maintained secondary schools to provide gender information whilst remaining voluntary for special and independent schools. 304 schools (98%) supplied gender data in 2010/11, compared to 311 schools (97%) of schools in 2009/10. It is not advisable to compare year on year changes prior to 2007/08 in absenteeism by gender as different schools responded each year.

Due to the effect that partial closures of schools due to extreme weather conditions during the 2009/10 academic year had on schools' attendance rates caution should be used when comparing year-on-year changes.